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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Yemen, Syria/Cuba,
Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Iraq, Iran (6/7)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported Vice President Farouk al-Shara's two-day official visit to Yemen and his meeting with Yemeni President Ali Abdullah al-Saleh, conveying a message from President Asad on recent developments in the Arab and international arenas. Shara also met with Yemeni Vice President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi. Shara told the press that his talks with Yemeni officials touched upon the situation in Iraq. He underlined that both sides stressed the importance of preserving Iraq's unity and sovereignty, pointing to the necessity of ending foreign occupation of its land. "We touched upon the Palestinian issue and expressed our hope that our Palestinian brothers will adopt dialogue as the principal basic for reaching an understanding," he said, calling upon Palestinians to unify ranks and end disagreements. "All Arab and Islamic nations care about the Palestinian issue," he added.

Papers also reported Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Faysal Miqdad's tour of Latin America, starting from Havana, where he met with Marcos Rodriguez Costa, Cuban Foreign Minister. The ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding on political consultation. Miqdad exchanged views with the Deputy Chairman of the National Association of Public Authority, and the Deputy Chairman of the International Relations Department at the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party on issues of mutual interest and means of boosting the historical relations between the two countries. The Cuban side expressed appreciation for Syria's support of the Cuban people in the face of the American siege imposed on it for more than 40 years. They also expressed support for Syria's national stances regarding legitimate Arab issues. An official discussion session was held at the Cuban Foreign Ministry headquarters, headed by Dr. Miqdad and Rodriguez Costa, in which the Cuban side expressed support for Syria's right to restoration of the occupied Golan. The two sides expressed support for the Palestinian people in establishing their independent state, and asserted the necessity of maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity and sovereignty. They also discussed preparations for the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Cuba next September.

Papers also reported the meeting of the Lebanese National Gathering in Beirut, which reiterated the importance of enhancing Syrian-Lebanese relations and activating prospects of cooperation

by carrying out the agreements that have been signed between the two countries. In a statement to the press, the Lebanese Gathering asserted that the only way to make Syrian-Lebanese relations successful is by rejecting exploitation of Lebanon to accomplish American-Zionist schemes against the region. It said that "relations between the National Gathering and Syria are principled and based on fraternity, coordination and cooperation," rejecting foreign intervention in Lebanon's internal affairs. The statement reiterated support for the Lebanese national resistance in the face of Israeli aggression as the way to liberate the occupied Shabaa's Farms.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad sends a letter to Yemeni President on latest developments in the region and bilateral relations.
Vice President Shara: Our talks with Yemeni senior officials were fruitful and useful. Speaker of Yemeni Parliament Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar lauds Syria's positions and expresses full solidarity with it in the face of foreign pressure" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/7)

"Deputy FM Midad commences a tour of Latin America, starting in Havana, and signs a memorandum of understanding on political consultation between Syria and Cuba" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 6/7)

"President Lahoud: The resistance is an honor to Lebanon and the source of its strength and stability" (Government-owned Syria Times, 6/7)

"The Lebanese National Gathering reiterates the importance of fostering Syrian-Lebanese relations and calls for forming a national unity government and establishing a new election law" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/7)
"Arab efforts to solve the Palestinian crisis. Abbas pushes towards a referendum. Hamas insists on dialogue" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/7)

"A US soldier killed in Baghdad, a Danish soldier killed in Basra. Controversy over nominees for security portfolios continues" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/7)

"Solana delivers Western proposals to end Iran's nuclear crisis: Iran needs time to consider proposals" (Government-owned Tisrheen, 6/7)

"Beijing rejects US claims: Iran does not support terrorism" (Government-owned Terrorism" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/7)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"America: Syria is Trafficking in Humans?!"

Asaad Abboud, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra stated (6/7): "The U.S. State Department report on human trafficking placed Syria in the third and lowest tier along with, of course, Iran. The same report listed Syria last year in the second tier. So the shift between last year and this year is an indicator of the development of American policy and the U.S. political stand towards Syria.

"I don't think there is a visitor in the whole world, including Americans who have visited Syria and stayed for a few days or longer, who does not know the illogicality of what was stated in the Department of State report. It is far removed from the truth, and I think that every American who has known Syria, including members of the diplomatic corps and American Embassy personnel, know that it is fabrication that is drenched in sin up to the neck....

"America is trying to strike all principles of human rights in the world by distorting the situations of human beings and states to subjugate them to political inclinations. Just recently the Pentagon dared to infringe the Geneva Convention on POWs, so it withdrew from a provision in the Geneva Convention to exempt US forces from their hideous acts.

"As for us, let us be cautious; the issue is not a game. They are intending to hit us in our best preserved treasure: social and moral security."

"A US Lesson in Ethics"

Abd-al-Fattah al-Awad, Chief Editor of government-owned Al-Thawra, said (6/7): "The instruments that 'they' [the enemies] use to realize their objectives include: spreading instability, igniting endless wars, recruiting agents and collaborators, forming death squads, and imposing sanctions and punishments through the Security Council....

"These are their instruments, and they have frequently used and tested them. But what has the result been? One failure after another, and decisive proof that these instrument are not fit for use in Syria....

"Syria's instruments, on the other hand, are: adherence to rights, insistence on reforms, and devotion to strong national unity not influenced by a few individuals staying in London,

Paris, and Washington hotels.

"Our instruments have always been effective, while theirs have always failed. The current results show a decline of the American plan, and the use of worn-out political tools
REFERENCE to Syrian opposition figures who met recently in London] shows a kind of bankruptcy." [Referring to a US announcement that Americans will give their soldiers in Iraq lessons in ethics and human values, Awad said]: "We think it is appropriate to get their tools who met in London to attend these lessons. Ethics will be of a high level when taught to the occupier and its cheap tools. Then we might achieve the difficult equation of 'ethical occupation' or the even more difficult equation of 'ethical traitor'."

"Let's Beware a Conspiracy"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (6/7): "Palestinians must be alert to the Israeli-American ploy that seeks to create internal strife in the Palestinian territories. It has become imperative that Palestinians consolidate their national unity and confront Israel's attempts to implement Judaization plans and impose new occupational facts on the ground under the pretext that there is no Palestinian partner in the peace process....

"The Israeli enemy, which has failed to subjugate the Palestinian people, is working, in collusion with the current US Administration, on two things: imposing a siege and creating sedition in the Palestinian territories. In this, it takes advantage of any tension among the Palestinians....

"The tragic situation, resulting from the siege and the cut of aid to the Palestinian people upon American orders and Israeli demands, is not the responsibility of the Palestinian government or any other Palestinian faction.

"Israel has never been serious in the peace process with the Palestinians...."

"No Alternative to Dialogue"

Ibrahim Shugayr, a commentator in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (6/7): "We regret that the Palestinian national dialogue has shown deep differences among the factions at a time when Israel is imposing economic siege, starvation, and collective punishment against the Palestinian people to bring them to their knees and force them to abandon their national principles and historical rights.

"The Palestinian prisoners' document was meant as a basis for dialogue, not as a tool to divide the Palestinians.... What is surprising is that the document, in and of itself, became an end before the conclusion of the dialogue sessions.... We have high respect for the prisoners' document, which contained positive points and won approval. There are issues [in the document] on which there is national unanimity, but there are other strategic issues, such as the refugees, the land, and international legitimacy, that must be discussed....

"The proposed referendum on the prisoners' document entails many risks.... For example, if the document is rejected in the referendum, what will be the fate of the PA Presidency if it holds negotiations with Israel? And if the document is approved, what will be the fate of the Palestinian democratic option and the resistance option, especially since Olmert threatens every day that he will implement the unilateral disengagement plan, complete the construction of the racial segregation wall, annex

the major settlement blocks, draw Israel's final borders, and distance the Palestinian partner....?

"Dialogue is the only option the Palestinians have...."

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